

MACAULAY'S THIRD CHAPTER

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but the passages I have cited are, I think, quite sufficient to establish its substantial accuracy.¹

In several respects, the position of the clergy was seriously affected by the Revolution and its consequences.

The non-juring schism, due to the refusal of Sancroft and other bishops and clergymen to swear allegiance to William III, caused a division which diminished the moral authority of the Church. That authority was further impaired by the quarrels between the High and Low Church parties, and between the Lower and Upper Houses of Convocation. During the same period the Toleration

Act, by the comparative freedom which it gave to the Non-conformists, allowed them to increase in numbers and strength,² and to attain municipal and civil offices from which they had previously been excluded. Finally, the whole tendency of the speculative movement of the time was to undermine the political influence of the clergy by weakening their spiritual influence. Burnet bitterly complains of the attacks of 'profane wits'³ upon the Church :

It is a common topic of discourse, to treat ail mysteries in religion as the contrivances of priests to bring the world into a blind submission to them ; *priestcraft* grew to be another word in fashion, and the enemies of religion vented all their impieties under the cover of these words.³

Jeremy Collier, in his *Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage* (1698), defended the clergy against the dramatists, by claiming that ministers of religion in general ought to be immune from attack.⁴

¹W. E. H. Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, i. (1919), 97ⁿ.

²At most the} ⁷ did not number 5 per cent of the population.

² Gilbert Burnet, *History of My Own Time*, li. 211-12.

⁴ Macaulay, IV, 1722 (xiv).